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BIRTH PLACE OF ROBERT BURNS, THE AYRSHIRE POET.

The above sketch of the birth place of Burns, as well as the portrait which appears in a succeeding page, we have copied from the first volume of the *Life and Works of the poet*, just published by his companion and friend, Allan Cunningham.

Were the spirit of Burns permitted once more to revisit this nether world—the house of his fathers—the “banks and braes o’ bonnie Doon,” and to read all that has been written of him by his former companions and present biographers, we feel not the slightest hesitation in asserting that he would, with all the energy of his nature, exclaim, “save me from my friends, and most of all from Allan Cunningham.” Formerly “The Ayrshire Poet” was known to many, simply as a man of talent and of genius—as the poet of nature—a poet of the first order in his particular line: at present, whoever studies his character in the light thrown upon it by Allan Cunningham, and some others of his friends must not only consider him to have been a poet and a genius, but a man of the most dissipated habits, whom no advice could reach, and no efforts reclaim; as a character that should be held up as a kind of beacon

or warning to others; a man who, having received a religious education, and possessing many advantages in youth, burst every bound of propriety and moral feeling, and wasted the short space of his existence in excess, riot, and dissipation of every description. We cannot but say, it appears to us a most extraordinary procedure, that while apparently endeavouring to combat the idea of the poet being either a drunkard, a debauchee, or an infidel, his biographer should have furnished the most convincing proofs against his own arguments, not only by giving some of the very worst and most licentious pieces Burns ever wrote, but in raking up the memory of errors and evil doings which should have been allowed to rest quietly with him for ever in the grave. Indeed the more we read of his private life and private character, the more are we disposed to think that his biographers, like the biographers of Byron, have one and all been his bitterest enemies.—How many things concerning him have they related, and thus brought before the gaze of a censorious world, over which it would have been much better to have thrown the veil or mantle of charity and forgetfulness. In truth, we

very much question the sincerity of those professed friends of departed genius, who, in order either to render their biography more palatable to the depraved taste of the public, or to prove their intimacy, would drag from their secret places those imperfections of private character—errors of life—to many of which, perhaps, as *professed friends*, they were alone privy. The vain boast in Mr. Cunningham's brief preface, that in the present edition there are more than one hundred pieces which have not been given in Currie's octavo edition, together with the hint that he had availed himself of the poet's *private* letters, savours very much of the unworthy feeling which would sacrifice the memory of a friend at the shrine of editorial popularity. Well would it have been for Burns, and even for the credit of his biographer, had as many pieces as those mentioned with exultation been omitted from the volume altogether. For a man like Robert Burns, rendered giddy by a sudden elevation into a sphere or region to which he was a perfect stranger, and for which he was evidently unfitted—dragged from the peaceful pursuits of husbandry into the dangerous vortex of fashionable dissipation, we can make every allowance, but for his *friendly* biographers, none whatever. After all, perhaps, it is well that those darker shadings in the picture of Burns's life have been faithfully given. They may furnish a lesson to others, that no talent however exalted—no mere powers of mind or thought, however much beyond the ordinary standard of mortals, can ever really exalt an individual, the general tenor of whose conduct is such as to earn for him the disapproving voice of the good and the virtuous. Receiving the education which he did from kind and affectionate relatives and friends, there can certainly be little excuse for the part he afterwards acted in the drama of life. On such a subject, however, our space, and a remembrance of the adage '*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*,' forbid us to amplify. There is no doubt the work before us must be interesting to every one who takes an interest in the life and writings of a man of genius such as Burns was. As a regular analysis of the six volumes would fill half a dozen of our Journals from end to end, we shall endeavour simply to select such extracts taken without any reference to connection, as may furnish some general idea of the Life of this 'Bard of Nature.'

BIRTH PLACE OF BURNS.

"Robert Burns, eldest son of William Burness and Agnes Brown his wife, was born 25th January, 1759, in a clay-built cottage, raised by his father's own hands, on the banks of the Doon, in the district of Kyle, and county of Ayr. The season was ungentle and rough, the walls weak and new:—some days after his birth a wind arose which crushed the frail structure, and the unconscious Poet was carried unharmed to the shelter of a neighbouring house. He loved to allude, when he grew up, to this circumstance; and ironically claim some commiseration for the stormy passions of one ushered into the world by a tempest. This rude edifice is now an alehouse and belongs to the shoemakers of Ayr: the recess in the wall, where the bed stood in which he was born, is pointed out to inquiring guests; the sagacious landlord remembers, 'oo, as he brings in the ale, that he has seen and conversed with Burns, and ventures to relate traits of his person and manners. There is nothing very picturesque about the cottage or its surrounding grounds: the admirers of the Muses' haunts will see little to call romantic in low meadows, flat enclosures, and long lines of public road. Yet the district, now emphatically called 'The Land of Burns,' has many attractions. There are fair streams, beautiful glens, rich pastures, picturesque patches of old natural wood; and, if we may trust proverbial rhyme, 'Kyle for a man' is a boast of old standing. The birth of the illustrious Poet has caused the vaunt to be renewed in our own days."

BURNS'S PARENTS.

"The mother of Burns was a native of the county of Ayr; her birth was humble, and her personal attractions moderate; yet, in all other respects, she was a remarkable woman. She was blessed with singular equanimity of temper; her religious feeling was deep and constant; she

loved a well-regulated household; and it was frequently her pleasure to give wings to the weary hours of a chequered life by chaunting old songs and ballads, of which she had a large store. In her looks she resembled her eldest son; her eyes were bright and intelligent; her perception of character, quick and keen. She lived to a great age, rejoiced in the fame of the Poet, and partook of the fruits of his genius.

"His father was from another district. He was the son of a farmer in Kincardineshire, and born on the lands of the noble family of Keith Marischall. The retainer, like his chief, fell into misfortunes; his household was scattered, and William Burness, with a small knowledge of farming, and a large stock of speculative theology, was obliged to leave his native place, in search of better fortune, at the age of nineteen. He has been heard to relate with what bitter feelings he bade farewell to his younger brother on the top of a lonely hill, and turned his face toward the border. His first resting-place was Edinburgh, where he obtained a slight knowledge of gardening; thence he went into Ayrshire, and procured employment, in the double capacity of steward and gardener, from Ferguson of Doonside. Imagining now that he had established a resting-place, he took a wife, leased a small patch of land for a nursery, and raised that frail shealing, the catastrophe of which has already been related.

"Amid all these toils and trials, William Burness remembered the worth of religious instruction, and the usefulness of education in the rearing of his children.—He set, too, the example which he taught. He abstained from all profane swearing and vain discourse, and shunned all approach to levity of conversation or behaviour. A week-day in his house wore the sobriety of a Sunday; nor did he fail in performing family worship in a way which enabled his son to give the world that fine picture of domestic devotion, the 'Cottar's Saturday Night.' The depressing cares of the world, and a consciousness, perhaps, that he was fighting a losing battle, brought an almost habitual gloom to his brow. He had nothing to cheer him but a sense of having done his duty. The education of his sons he confided to other hands. At first he sent Robert to a small school at Alloway Miln, within a mile of the place of his birth; but the master was removed to a better situation, and his place was supplied by John Murdoch, a candidate for the honours of the church, who undertook, at a moderate salary, to teach the boys of Lochlea, and the children of five other neighbouring farmers, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and Latin. He was a young man, a good scholar, and an enthusiastic instructor, with a moderate knowledge of human nature, and a competent share of pedantry. He made himself acceptable to the elder Burness by engaging in conversations on speculative theology, and in lending his learning to aid the other's sagacity and penetration; and he rendered himself welcome to Robert by bringing him knowledge of any kind—by giving him books—telling him about eminent men—and teaching him the art—which he was not slow in learning—of opening up fresh sources of information for himself.

"Of the progress which Robert made in knowledge, his teacher has given us a very clear account. In reading, writing, and arithmetic, he excelled all boys of his own age, and took rank above several who were his seniors.—The New Testament, the Bible, the English Grammar, and Mason's collection of verse and prose, laid the foundation of devotion and knowledge.

"Of these early and interesting days, during which the future man was seen, like fruit shaping amid the unfolded bloom, we have a picture drawn by the poet's own hand, and touched off in his own vivid manner.—'At seven years of age I was by no means a favourite with any body. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot piety—I say, idiot piety, because I was then but a child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and, by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. The earliest composi-

tion that I recollect taking pleasure in, was the Vision of Mirza, and a hymn of Addison's beginning,

"How are thy servants blest, O Lord!"

I particularly remember one half stanza, which was music to my ear—

"For though on dreadful whirls we hung,
High on the broken wave,"

"I met with these in Mason's English collection, one of my school-books. The two first books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two I have read since, were the Life of Hannibal, and the History of the Acts and Deeds of Sir William Wallace. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest."

"The education of Burns was not over when the school doors were shut. The peasantry of Scotland turn their cottages into schools; and when a father takes his arm-chair by the evening fire, he seldom neglects to communicate to his children whatever knowledge he possesses himself. Nor is this knowledge very limited; it extends, generally, to the history of Europe, and to the literature of the island; but more particularly to the divinity, the poetry, and what may be called the traditionary history of Scotland. An intelligent peasant is intimate with all those skirmishes, sieges, combats, and quarrels, domestic or national, of which public writers take no account.—Genealogies of the chief families are quite familiar to him. He has by heart, too, whole volumes of songs and ballads; nay, long poems sometimes abide in his recollection; nor will he think his knowledge much, unless he knows a little about the lives and actions of the men who have done most honour to Scotland. In addition to what he has on his memory, we may mention what he has on the shelf. A common husbandman is frequently master of a little library: history, divinity, and poetry, but most so the latter, compose his collection. Milton and Young are favourites; the flowery Meditations of Hervey, the religious romance of the Pilgrim's Progress, are seldom absent; while of Scottish books, Ramsay, Thompson, Fergusson, and now Burns, together with songs and ballad-books innumerable, are all huddled together, soiled with smoke, and frail and tattered by frequent use. The household of William Burness was an example of what I have described; and there is some truth in the assertion, that in true knowledge the poet was, at nineteen, a better scholar than nine-tenths of our young gentlemen when they leave school for the college."

"Let us look into this a little more closely; nor can we see with a clearer light than what Burns himself has afforded us.—'What I knew of ancient story,' he observes, 'was gathered from Salmon and Guthrie's Geographical Grammars; and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature and criticism, I got from the Spectator. These, with Pope's works, some plays of Shakspeare, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, the Heathen Pantheon, Locke on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, Justice's British Gardener's Dictionary, Bayle's Lectures, Allan Ramsay's Works, Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, A Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey's Meditations, had formed the whole of my reading.' But when to these we add Young's Night Thoughts, which his own poems prove him to have admired, we cannot see that he have advanced far on the way in which he walked, when he disciplined himself for the service of the Scottish muse. In truth, none of the works we have enumerated, save the poems of Allan Ramsay, could be of farther use to him than to fill his mind with information, and shew him what others had done. The "Address to the Deil," "Highland Mary," and "Tam o' Shanter" are the fruit of far different studies."

"Burns had, in truth, a secret school of study, in which he set up ther models for imitation than Pope or Hervey.—'In my infant and boyish days,' he observes to Doctor Moore, 'I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family (Jenny Wilson by name), remarkable

for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, contraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poesie; but had so strong an effect upon my imagination that to this hour in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a look-out in suspicious places.' Here we have the poet taking lessons in the classic lore of his native land and profiting largely; yet, to please a scholar like his correspondent, he calls his instructress an ignorant old woman, and her stories idle trumpery. Let the name of Jenny Wilson be revered by all lovers of the northern muse; her tales gave colour and character to many fine effusions. The supernatural in these legends was corrected and modified by the natural which his growing sense saw in human life, and found in the songs of his native land. 'The collection of songs,' he says, 'was my *vade-mecum*. I pored over them, driving my cart or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true tender or sublime from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is.' The songs of Scotland had, in no remote day, the advantages of the schooling which in these early hours he gave his fancy and understanding."

"A student in art first studies the works of earlier masters; as he advances, living figures are placed before him, that he may see nature with his own eyes. Burns, who knew nothing of academic rules, pursued a similar course in poetry. He had become acquainted with limb and lineament of the muse, as she had been seen by others: he could learn no more from the dead, and now had recourse to the living: he had hitherto looked on in silence; it was now time to speak. Beauty first gave utterance to his crowding thoughts; with him love and poetry were co-evals."

"While the boy was thus rising into the man, and the mind was expanding with the body, both were in danger of being crushed, as the daisy was, in the poet's own immortal strains, beneath the weight of the furrow. The whole life of his father was a continued contest with fortune. He was, however, fertile in expedients: when he found that his farm was unproductive in corn, he thought the soil suitable for flax, and resolved himself to raise the commodity, while to the poet he allotted the task of manufacturing it for the market. To accomplish this, it was necessary that he should be instructed in flax-dressing: accordingly, at Midsummer, 1781, Robert went to Irvine, where he wrought under the eye of one Peacock, kinsman to his mother. His mode of life was frugal enough. 'He possessed,' says Currie, 'a single room for his lodging, rented, perhaps, at the rate of a shilling a week. He passed his days in constant labour as a flax-dresser, and his food consisted chiefly of oatmeal sent to him from his father's family.' A picture of his situation and feelings is luckily preserved of his own drawing; the simplicity of the expression, and pure English of the style, are not its highest qualities. He thus wrote to his father:—'Honoured Sir—I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-year's day: but work comes so hard upon us that I do not choose to be absent on that account. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind that I dare neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity: for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it; and, if I do

not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

"As for this world," he continues, "I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing, to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it is yet too late." This letter is dated December 27, 1781.

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So much for the opening scenes in the poet's existence, which bring us up to the year 1784:

"We are now about to enter into the regions of romance. 'I began,' says Burns, 'to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes.' The course of his life hitherto has shewn that his true vocation was neither the plough nor the hackle.

"Poetry had now become with him a darling pursuit: he had no settled plan of study, for he composed at the plough, at the harrow, and with the reaping-hook in his hand, and usually had half a dozen or more poems in progress, taking them up as the momentary tone of his mind suited the sentiment of the verse, and laying them down as he grew careless or became fatigued.

* * * * *

"Burns, in all respects, arose from the people: he worked his way out of the darkness, drudgery and vulgarities of rustic life, and, in spite of poverty, pain, and disappointment, emerged into the light of heaven. He was surrounded by coarse and boisterous companions, who were fit for admiring the ruder sallies of his wit, but incapable of understanding those touches of moral pathos and exquisite sensibility with which his sharpest things are accompanied. They perceived but the thorns of the rose—they felt not its fine odour. The spirit of poesie led him, in much peril, through the prosaic wilderness around, and prepared him for asserting his right to one of the highest places in the land of song.

"This study of song, love of reading, wanderings in woods, nocturnal excursions in matters of love and choice of companions, who had seen much and had much to tell, was, unconsciously to himself, forcing Burns upon the regions of poesie. To these may be added the establishment of a club, in which subjects of a moral or domestic nature were discussed. The Tarbolton club consisted of some half-dozen young lads, sons of farmers; the poet, who planned it, was the ruling star; the place of meeting was a small public-house in the village; the sum expended by each was not to exceed three-pence, and, with the humble cheer which this could bring, they were, when the debate was concluded, to toast their lasses and the continuance of friendship. Here he found a vent for his own notions, and as the club met regularly and continued for years, he disciplined himself into something of a debater, and acquired a readiness and fluency of language; he was never at a loss for thoughts.

"That Burns talked and thought too freely and indiscreetly in his early years, we have evidence in verse. In his memorandum-book there are entries which, amid all their spirit and graphic beauty, contain levities of expression which may be tolerated when the wine is flowing and the table in a roar, but which look not so becoming on the sober page which reflection has sanctioned.

"The consequences of keeping company with the free and the joyous were now to be manifested. Soon after his father's death one of his mother's maids, in person not at all attractive, produced his,

"Sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess," and furnished him with the opportunity of standing as a sinner on the stool of repentance, and commemorating the event in rhymes, licentious as well as humorous.

"It is painful to touch, even with a gentle hand, on the moral sores of so fine a genius, but his character cannot be understood otherwise; almost any other erring

youth would have resigned himself, without resistance, to the discipline of the kirk, and bowed to its rebuke. Burns was not to be so tamed—stricken, he struck again, and, instead of courting silence and seclusion, sung a new song, and walked out into the open sunshine of remark and observation. I cannot set this regardlessness down to growing hardness within, or to petrified feeling: it arose from a want of taste in seeking distinction. 'The mair they talk, I'm kenn'd the better,' he had already adopted as a motto; he knew that folly such as his was not uncommon, and he hoped for one person who censured, there would be two who thought him a clever fellow, with wit at will—a little of a sinner, but a great deal of a poet.

"This desire of distinction was strong in Burns. In those days he would not let a five pound-note pass through his hands without bearing away a witty endorsement in rhyme: a drinking-glass always afforded space for a verse: the blank leaf of a book was a favourite place for a stanza; and the windows of inns, and even dwelling-houses which he frequented, exhibit to this day lively sallies from his hand. Yet, perhaps, a love of fame was not stronger in him than in others. In his time magazines were few, and newspapers not numerous; into the daily, weekly, or monthly papers, aspirants in verse can now pour their effusions: but Burns had no such facilities when he started, and was obliged to take the nearest way to notice. He began, likewise, to talk of his exploits over the pint-stoup. He gave to himself, in one of his rhymes, the name of 'drunken ranter,' and with ordinary powers, and but a moderate inclination, desired to be numbered with five-bottle debauchees, who saw three horns on the moon, and had,

"A voice like a sea, and a drought like a whale."

He went farther: he asserted, with Meston, good rhyme to be the product of good drink, and sung—

'I've seen me daiz't upon a time
I scarce could wink, or see a styme,
Just ae half-mutchkin does me prime,
Ought less is little:
Then back I rattle on the rhyme
As gleg's a whittle.

"This vaunted insobriety in verse must not be taken literally. We have seen Burns passionately in love in rhyme—we know that he was not less so with his living goddess of the hour; but it was otherwise with him in the matter of strong drink. He was no practised toper, but thought it necessary to look a gay fellow in poetry."

Really we can scarcely think Mr. Cunningham serious in what he says in this passage, and we fear few of his readers will agree with him. Having written verses on half the lasses in his neighbourhood, he made himself numerous enemies as well as many friends by the publication of his "HolyFair," and some others of a similar genus; we find him in 1786, about two years from the period of his first setting out as a regular poet, writing to his friends, Hamilton and Aiken, saying "he was afraid that his follies would prevent him from enjoying a situation in the Excise, even if it could be procured; he was pining in secret wretchedness; disappointment, pride, and remorse were settling on his vitals like vultures, and in an hour of social mirth his gaiety was the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. 'All these reasons,' he says, 'urge me to go abroad,' and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances every thing that can be laid in the scale against it.' He wrote in the same strain to others. This was on the 19th of November; on the 20th he enclosed a copy of 'Holy Willie's Prayer' to his comrades, Chalmers and M'Adam, desiring it might be burnt, as a thing abominable and wicked, at the Cross of Ayr; and on the twenty-second, he wrote, as he imagined, the last song he was to measure in Caledonia:

'The gloomy night is gath'ring fast,
Loud roars the wild, inconstant blast,
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave,
I think upon the stormy wave,

Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonnie banks of Ayr.

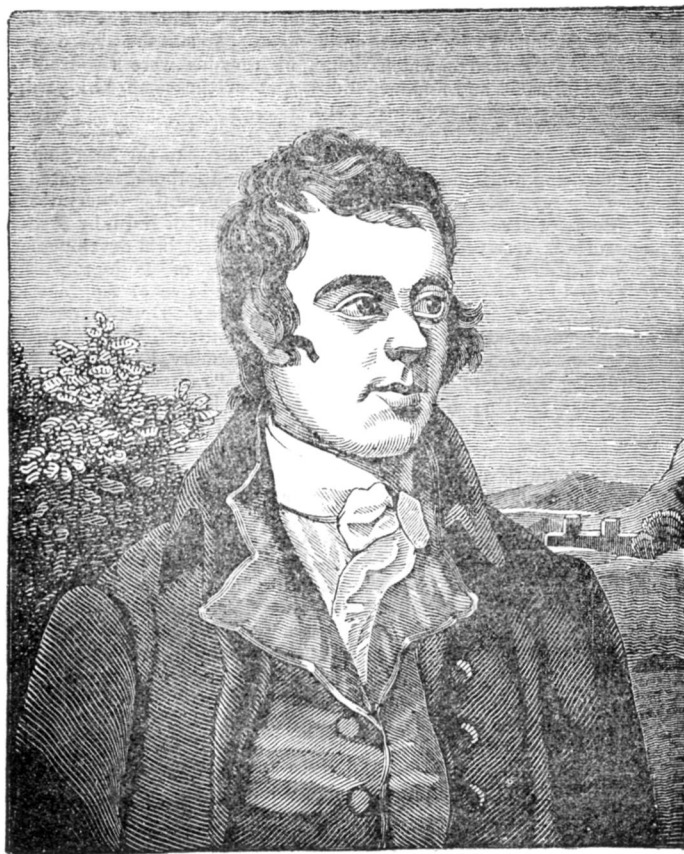
"It was well for the world, and, perhaps, unfortunate for Burns, that when he had bid farewell to his friends, put his chest on the way to Greenock, and was about to follow, a letter from Dr. Blacklock overthrew all his schemes.

The purport of this was a pressing solicitation to publish a volume of his poems. Having shortly after been introduced to James Earl of Glencairn, he took him by the hand, and with small persuasion prevailed on Creech to become the publisher of the contemplated edition on terms favourable to Burns. The poet stipulated to receive one hundred pounds for the copy-right of one edition, with the profits of the subscription copies. A prospectus was drawn out, a vast number printed and circulated over the island, and subscriptions came pouring in with a rapidity unknown in the history of Scottish genius.

"It is honourable to the patricians of the north that they welcomed the poet with much cordiality, and sub-

scribed largely; it is honourable to the stately literati of Edinburgh that they not only received their rustic brother gladly into their ranks, but spoke every where of his fine genius with undissembled rapture, and introduced him wherever introductions were beneficial: but it is still more honourable to the husbandmen, the shepherds, and the mechanics of Scotland, that though wages were small, and money scarce, they subscribed for copies, in fifties and in hundreds, and thus extended the patronage, always the most welcome since it implies admiration. All men distinguished in the world of letters, lent their still more effectual aid; nay, some of them carried the subscription-lists in their pockets, and obtained names through all their wide range of acquaintance.

"Burns arrived in Edinburgh at the close of November 1786; and before, as he poetically said, the cry of the cuckoo was heard, no less than two thousand eight hundred and odd copies were subscribed for by fifteen hundred and odd subscribers.



ROBERT BURNS.

Burns, in his youth, was tall and sinewy, with coarse swarthy features, and a ready word of wit or of kindness for all. The man differed little from the lad; his form was vigorous, his limbs shapely, his knees firmly knit, his arms muscular and round, his hands large, his fingers long, and he stood five feet ten inches high. All his movements were unconstrained and free:—he had a slight stoop of the neck, betokening a holder of the plough; and a lock or so of his dark waving hair was tied carelessly behind with two casts of narrow black ribbon. His looks beamed with genius and intelligence; his forehead was broad and clear, shaded by raven locks inclining to curl; his cheeks were furrowed more with anxiety than time; his nose was short rather than long; his mouth, firm and manly; his teeth, white and regular; and there was a dimple, a small one, on his chin. His eyes were large, dark, and lustrous; I have heard them likened to coach-lamps approaching in a dark night, because they were first seen of any part of the poet. 'I never saw,' said Scott, 'such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished

men of my time.' In his ordinary moods, Burns looked a man of a hundred; but when animated in company, he was a man of a million; his swarthy features glowed; his eyes kindled up till they all but lightened; his ploughman stoop vanished: and his voice—deep, manly, and musical—added its sorcery of pathos or of wit, till the dullest owned the enchantments of genius.

"His personal strength was united to great activity; he could move a twenty stone sack of meal without much apparent effort, and load a cart with bags of corn in the time, one of his neighbours said, that other men were talking about it. A mason was hewing him a stone for a cheese-press, and Burns took pleasure as a side was squared to turn over the huge mass unaided. A large pebble is still pointed out at Ellisland, as his putting-stone; and though no living man in Nithsdale perhaps can poise it in the air, the tradition proves the popular belief in his great strength.

"Burns desired as much to excel in conversation as he did in these fits and starts of husbandry; but he was more